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Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Letter dated 24 April 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey to you information on the work being carried out in Uzbekistan on ensuring and protecting the rights of children (see annex).

I would highly appreciate it if you could circulate the attached information as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 65 (a).

(*Signed*) Murad **Askarov**
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uzbekistan

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Annex to the letter dated 24 April 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Protection of the rights and interests of children: a policy priority for the Government of Uzbekistan

Since Uzbekistan first gained its independence and declared that a strong social policy was one of the five fundamental principles of the Uzbek development model, the country has been making significant efforts to ensure and protect the rights and interests of children and young people and to implement its international commitments in that area consistently. Children make up 40 per cent of the population of Uzbekistan, with young people under the age of 30 accounting for 64 per cent of the population.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was one of the first international instruments to which Uzbekistan adhered (on 9 December 1992) after the Constitution was adopted. In ratifying that instrument, our country undertook to comply with all of the Convention's provisions and assumed responsibility before the international community for their implementation.

A body of rights of children and young people is enshrined in the national Constitution, and those rights are also defined and guaranteed by the Civil Code (1995) and the Family Code (1998). More than 10 statutes, 30 Presidential decrees and decisions, some 40 decisions of the Cabinet of Ministers and 30 departmental regulatory instruments have been adopted, setting forth the fundamental rights of the child and how those rights are to be protected.

Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals is considered especially important, in particular, improving the quality of education, reducing child mortality and improving maternal health. A Cabinet of Ministers decision of 26 January 2011 approved a set of additional measures to implement the Millennium Development Goals in Uzbekistan for the period from 2011 to 2015 and established a working group to coordinate implementation of those measures. The decision also provides for an annual parliamentary briefing on implementation of the Goals.

The year 2012 has been declared the Year of the Family, and a programme of action of the same name was adopted. These take as their point of departure the inestimable role of the family in raising a physically healthy, emotionally mature and well-rounded generation that is capable of independent thought, and able to distinguish between good and evil and compete on an equal footing with its counterparts in developed countries, as well as the role of the family in protecting our children's health and preparing them for all that life may place in their path. The programme's goals include further reinforcing practical engagement between the institution of the family and the sphere of education, whether in kindergartens, schools, lyceums, colleges or universities.

Non-governmental organization (NGO) activity has increased appreciably, with NGOs promoting the protection of various categories of children's rights. NGOs such as the Forum of Culture and Arts of Uzbekistan Foundation, the National Association of NGOs and Non-Profit Organizations of Uzbekistan, the Association for Support of Children and Families, the Soglom Avlod Uchun Foundation, the Sen Yolgiz Emassan

Fund, the Kamolot Youth Organization, the Makhala Foundation, the Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan and the Oila Centre for Research and Development also focus on implementing children's rights to education, health care and social protection, as well as monitoring the situation in the relevant areas.

The Forum of Culture and Arts of Uzbekistan Foundation (now known as the Forum Foundation, owing to its significantly expanded scope of activity, which currently includes cultural projects and initiatives with a social orientation) is making a significant contribution to the harmonious development of children.

Support for children and provision of the conditions necessary for the promotion of their rights and interests is one of the most important social areas of the Foundation's work, carried out in direct and close partnership with the Zhenskoye Sobranie (Women's Assembly) civic organization, the Mekhr Nuri (Light of Charity) Foundation and the Social Initiatives Support Foundation. Pooling their efforts, these organizations carry out dozens of projects each year designed to support children nationwide.

Central to their joint activity to support children are the establishment of free arts and sports facilities for children; the introduction into the general education system of a national inclusive education model to mainstream disabled children; the provision of material assistance to children from large families, families lacking social support and families with disabled children; and the organization of national competitions and festivals to identify, encourage (through grants) and then support gifted children. These include the Yangi Avlod Children's Arts Festival, the Bolazhonlar-Shirintoilar Children's Fashion Festival, the "Baby" International Children's Rhythmic Gymnastics Championship, the International Contemporary Choreography and Sport Plastic Art Competition and the Snezhinka (Snowflake) Gymnastics Championship.

In 2008, the Parliament of Uzbekistan ratified two highly important International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions: the Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (Convention No. 138) and the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (Convention No. 182). The same year, the Government of Uzbekistan adopted a decision on measures for the implementation of these ILO conventions and a relevant national plan of action.

The national plan of action provides, among other things, for improved legislation in this area, a system for monitoring the implementation of the ILO conventions and extensive outreach to inform the public about their content. The decision includes a regulation prohibiting organizations and individuals from forcing children to work and requiring compliance with legislation setting out the rules and conditions for juvenile labour.

Another important step in this process was taken when the Cabinet of Ministers adopted on 26 March 2012 a decision on additional measures to implement in 2012 and 2013 the Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour and the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour ratified by the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The main purpose of the decision is to continue national implementation of the ratified ILO conventions and to strengthen legislation and adopt additional measures to prevent forced or compulsory labour and eliminate the worst forms of child labour.

This document provides for adoption of a plan on additional measures to implement in 2012 and 2013 the ILO Conventions ratified by Uzbekistan concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour and the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

An interdepartmental working group to develop proposals for improving labour legislation based on the requirements and standards of the ratified conventions has been set up within the Ministry of Justice.

In accordance with the Uzbekistan National Classification System approved by Decision No. 12-284 of 9 August 2000 of the State Standardization and Certification Agency of Uzbekistan, the working group issued an amended and expanded list of jobs with poor working conditions that individuals below the age of 18 are prohibited from performing. The relevant decision of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and the Ministry of Health (Decision No. 1990) was registered with the Ministry of Justice on 29 July 2009.

The interdepartmental working group was established by a decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of 25 March 2011. Its primary objectives and areas of work are the following:

- To coordinate the work of the relevant ministries, agencies and stakeholder organizations to implement measures, programmes and plans based on the ILO conventions;
- To elaborate specific programmes and actions designed to fulfil Uzbekistan's commitments deriving from the ILO conventions;
- To conduct the necessary outreach work on the content and importance of the ILO conventions being implemented in Uzbekistan;
- To engage with international organizations, including international organizations accredited in Uzbekistan, on matters of education, health care, labour, employment, social protection and social and labour legislation.

The Act on amendments and additions to the Labour Code and to the Child Rights Act (24 December 2009) makes amendments and additions to 12 articles of the Labour Code and 1 article of the Act. Minors may now be employed starting only at age 16. Persons who have attained the age of 15 may be employed with the written consent of one parent or a person acting *in loco parentis*.

In order to increase the liability of business entities and individuals who violate the ban on juvenile labour or labour legislation on persons below the age of 18, the Act on additions to the Administrative Liability Code to improve legislation to protect the rights of minors was adopted on 21 December 2009. Subsequently, statutory instruments were put in place that govern the application and enforcement of laws in that area by the relevant ministries, departments and civic organizations.

The Council of the Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection have adopted recommendations on collective labour agreements that include conditions and requirements for employers when hiring minors and additional benefits and safeguards for young people.